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ABSTRACT

This newsletter issue focuses on how the family support movement can help reshape the human services delivery system to more effectively meet the needs of African American families. The newsletter includes the following articles: (1) "Dispelling Myths and Building on Strengths: Supporting African American Families"; (2) "The 'Nguzo Saba': African-Centered Values as Tools for Family Assessment, Support, and Empowerment"; (3) "Public Policy and African American Families: Employment, Education, Community Development"; (4) "African American Academic Achievement: Issues, Answers, and Promising Strategies"; (5) "It Takes a Whole Village To Raise a Child" (profiles of five programs); (6) "Understanding Fathers: Human Services Perspectives in Theory and Practice"; (7) "Black Churches and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Breaking the Silence"; (8) "The Importance of Including Grandparents in Services for African American Families"; and (9) "In Our Mothers' Homes There Is Still God: African American Spirituality."

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Volume 12, Number 1
Spring 1993

3 **Building on Cultural Strengths to Support African American Families**
Robert B. Hill, Ph.D.

6 **Viewpoint: Using the *Nguzo Saba* for Family Assessment, Support, and Empowerment**
Maisha Sullivan, M.S.W.

8 **A Public Policy Agenda for African American Families and Communities**
Erica E. Tollett

10 **Viewpoint: Reflections on the African American Experience in Schools**
Bette Wilson, M.Ed.

14 **It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Child: Overview and Program Profiles**
Harriette P. McAdoo, Ph.D.
Christine Vogel

18 **Human Services Professionals and African American Fathers**
John L. McAdoo, Ph.D.

21 **Black Churches and HIV/AIDS: Increasing Involvement**
Suzanne Randolph, Ph.D.
Andrew S. Billingsley, Ph.D.
Rev. Aundrea Scott

24 **Including Grandparents in Family Support Programs**
Algea O. Harrison, Ph.D.

26 **Viewpoint: Spirituality and African American Culture**
Betty J. Overton-Adkins, Ph.D.

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It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Child

Special Focus:

African American Families

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In This Issue

The failure of society to address itself to the problems of African Americans is reflected in the disproportionate numbers of families and children living in poverty. In 1982, approximately 29 percent of all African American men in the U.S. between the ages of 20 and 64 were not employed. African Americans in every income strata had less disposable income in 1984 than in 1980. The average middle-class and the average poor African American family had a lower standard of living in 1984 than in 1980. Thirty-five percent of all African American families had annual incomes below $10,000, as compared to 13.9 percent of white families; and 20 percent of African American families had incomes that exceeded $25,000 as compared to 48 percent of white families.

Historically, African American families have been vulnerable to economic stress, and there are no indications that conditions will change in the near future. African Americans are still victims of poverty and racism.

The essential and underlying dynamic of racism is the belief that white people are somehow better—brighter, prettier, more law-abiding—than African American people. These "illusions of white grandeur" constitute one of the most subtle and pervasive aspects of white racism.[1]

Racism is embedded in the fabric of the society in which we live. Defined as the systematic oppression, subjugation, and control of one racial group by another which places one group in a dominant or more powerful position, racism is made possible by the manner in which society is structured. In this society, racism emanates from white institutions, white cultural values, and white people and policies. African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities are victims of racism; and racism in the form of economic discrimination breeds poverty.

Unfortunately, the human services delivery system is poorly equipped to rectify the problems of poverty and racism. And in fact, the system often reinforces antiquated Eurocentric beliefs as it provides social welfare services. If individual inadequacy is the cause of poverty (as the American belief runs), then a poor family is an inadequate family, and there is little value or strength in the family unit.

The Family Resource Coalition rejects this logic. The FRC's African American Caucus is beginning to examine how the family support movement can help reshape the human services delivery system to more effectively meet the needs of African American families.

Family resource and support programs have been leaders in the field of human services reform, articulating the importance of holistic support for families struggling to raise their children in a society that does not always value the role of parents.

For the last two years, the African American Caucus, an affinity group of the Family Resource Coalition, has been working to ensure that African American family experiences and needs are also represented and that these families have the support they need to survive and thrive in their own communities. A major challenge of the next ten years is to ensure that family resource and support programs be widely implemented and that these programs be responsive to the needs of African American families and the professionals serving them. The mission of the African American Caucus is to find new ways of collaborating to improve services for African American families. It is imperative that we implement services that maximize the human potential in African American families and communities. It is our belief that a comprehensive collaborative effort inclusive of all disciplines that interact with our families is an aggressive start to developing an innovative approach to service integration.

This issue of the Family Resource Coalition's *Report* is devoted to African American families. We offer a range of articles exploring the diversity, character, and strengths of African American families and African American culture. We also include discussions of public policy and examples of successful programmatic strategies for empowering and strengthening African American families and communities.

The Family Resource Coalition firmly believes that the African American family and community have a spirit that deserves acknowledgment. For almost three centuries, African American families have struggled—through slavery, segregation, and institutional racist practices—to maintain the integrity of the African American family. The African American Caucus of the FRC offers a mandate to practitioners and advocates working with African American families to develop, implement, and demand that supportive institutions exist for our children and families.

Edith L. Crigler

Edith L. Crigler
Coordinator
African American Caucus

Notes

[1] BILLINGSLEY, A. (1992), *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, pp. 8-9.

Acknowledgement

Dr. Harriette Pipes McAdoo has played an active and encouraging role as mentor for this special focus issue. Her academic and published work on African American families coupled with her insight and sensitivity made her an invaluable guide in choosing authors, clarifying content, and balancing the topics highlighted in this *FRC Report*. The Coalition and the African American Caucus are most grateful to Dr. McAdoo's expertise and willing involvement.

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■ by Robert B. Hill, Ph.D.

Dispelling Myths and Building on Strengths: Supporting African American Families

What approaches are needed to enhance the social and economic functioning of African American families? Unfortunately, many observers wrongly believe that the problems of inner-city families are intractable. Conventional accounts of black families in the news media, for example, devote considerable space to citing many negative statistics to document the severity of the crisis. As little time is spent offering any remedies or solutions for overcoming these problems, many people think that the family crisis in inner-cities is overwhelming or hopeless. By blaming the victim—attributing the crisis to internal deficits or weaknesses such as female-headed families, poor work ethic, and underclass values rather than to external constraints such as racism, recessions, inflation, exodus of industries from inner-cities, anti-poor public policies and so on—they focus on identifying problems and not on generating solutions.

A strategy that identifies solutions and promising strategies for aiding African American families is desperately needed. And, the most effective strategy for strengthening African American families is to build on and reinforce their strengths. Thus, focusing on strengths is an approach that offers solutions.[1] One must first identify positive coping skills and then provide examples of public policies and social programs that can strengthen them.

Back in 1972, in *The Strengths of Black Families*[2], I identified five assets of African American families: strong achievement orientation, strong work orientation, flexible family roles, strong kinship bonds, and strong religious orientation. Although these characteristics can be found among other racial and ethnic groups, they have manifested themselves differently in black families because of their unique history of slavery and racial oppression. One strategy to help family support practitioners work more effectively with families of color, is to build on these strengths.

Striving to Achieve

Research reports have repeatedly found that, although black children achieve lower scores than white children on standardized tests, black children often have higher educational and occupational aspirations than white children of similar economic status. Some social scientists, puzzled by these findings, sought to explain this result in terms of pathology. Since these analysts characterized the lofty goals as too high and unrealistic, they concluded that it was necessary for educators to lower aspirations to prevent African American children from becoming frustrated as adults.

Unfortunately, many studies have revealed that as bright inner-city children advance through the public school system they encounter "misguidance" counselors who lower their aspirations and self-esteem to such an extent that they drop out in record numbers. What is needed are educators who help inner-city children to attain their high aspirations.

One of the most successful educational initiatives that reinforces the high-achievement orientation of inner-city children and their parents is the Head Start program. Since its inception in the late 1960s, this preschool program has included parental participation as an integral component, and has encouraged higher achievement among thousands of low-income children.

Another effective educational program for black youth is College Here We Come, whose goal has been to raise the educational and occupational horizons of young people residing in public housing. This initiative was launched in 1974 by Kimi Gray and other residents of the Kenilworth-Parkside public housing complex in southeastern Washington, D.C., and has provided a broad range of social and economic support, helping more than 600 low-income youth to attend college.

Also in Washington, D.C., PROJECT 2000 is an example of an early-intervention program designed to enhance the academic performance of black boys, especially those from single-parent, female-headed households. Dr. Spencer Holland, an African American educator, created this program, in collaboration with Concerned Black Men, to counteract the so-called fourth-grade syndrome: the

alienation of black boys from school as they reach the fourth grade. In order to provide positive male role models in the primary grades, Dr. Holland asks adult men to volunteer as assistants in grades one through three in an elementary school. This program expanded to three elementary schools in Baltimore, Maryland. An analysis of the program's pilot year reveals that it has had immediate positive effects.

Simba (young lion in Swahili) is a comprehensive male-socialization program developed by Jawanza Kunjufu in Chicago, Illinois to prepare black boys between the ages of 7 and 19 for the rites of passage to responsible manhood. This program presents positive black adult male roles, develops life skills, enhances ethnic and cultural identity, raises self-esteem and academic performance, and promotes healthy male-female relationships. Similar rites of passage programs—for girls and boys—have been developed in many other cities, such as Cleveland, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; Newark, New Jersey; and Berkeley, California.

Strong Work Ethic

Contrary to popular belief, most inner-city families have a strong work ethic. Although the American public believes that the majority of African American families are on welfare, national Census Bureau data reveal that only about one-fifth of these families received public assistance in the 1980s. In fact, only half of all *poor* black families received support from welfare.[3]

Even so, numerous innovative grassroots programs have developed to reduce welfare dependency. Some of the most effective programs have come from resident management corporations of public housing. These groups have demonstrated that they can maintain safe, pleasant, and comfortable living environments more efficiently and cost-effectively than local housing authorities. As a result of tenant management, vandalism has declined sharply, as have welfare dependency, school drop-outs, teenage pregnancy, and unemployment. At the same time, building repairs and rent collections have risen, indicating an increase in neighborhood stability.[4]

One key to the success of public housing is the hiring of former welfare recipients to operate local small businesses: maintenance, day care, laundry, tailoring, barbering, beauty care, catering, thrift shops, and reverse-commuting services. Examples of effective public housing initiatives abound throughout the nation: Bromly-Heath in Jamaica Plains, Massachusetts; Cochran Gardens in St. Louis, Missouri; Kenilworth-Parkside in Washington, D.C.; B.W. Cooper in New Orleans, Louisiana; and A. Harry Moore Houses in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Several innovative programs have been developed to enhance the entrepreneurial abilities of inner-city youth. These programs attempt to transfer the superb self-employment skills manifested by young drug-dealers to legal activities. For example, the Educational Training and Enterprise Center (ED-TEC) in Camden, N.J. has helped hundreds of youth create businesses in such areas as food vending, maintenance, security, and sales. And a former police officer has developed a mini-mall at Woodson J.H.S. in Washington, D.C. that consists of about ten small businesses—operated by the junior high school students.

Flexible Family Roles

In African American families, mothers assume some of the traditional roles of fathers, fathers assume roles of mothers, and children perform some parental functions for younger siblings. Some social scientists have characterized black fathers who perform traditionally female household chores, such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare as being henpecked by matriarchs. Yet this role adaptability has contributed to the stability and advancement of two-parent black households.

Role flexibility is most evident in the disproportionate number of African American families headed by women. Traditionally, single-parent families headed by women are depicted as broken or pathological, while two-parent families are described as intact or healthy. However, such characterizations erroneously equate family structure with family functioning. Research studies have revealed that many one-parent families are more intact or cohesive than many two-parent families: data on child abuse, battered wives, and runaway children indicate higher rates among two-parent families in suburban areas than among single-parents in inner-city communities.[5]

Many community-based programs designed to strengthen single-parent families have been established in inner-cities. One exemplary effort is the Sisterhood of Black Single Mothers, founded by Daphne Busby in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York. Since its inception in 1973, the sisterhood has demonstrated that the circumstances of low-income single mothers can be improved markedly by addressing their needs from a holistic perspective, by enhancing their sense of self-worth, and by developing their skills in such areas as parenting, male-female relations, education, and employment. This program, which started by helping single mothers to complete their high-school equivalency, has motivated many to attend and graduate from college. Programs targeted to young single black mothers abound across the nation.

Numerous communities have developed programs to enhance the parenting skills of black fathers. One of the earliest programs, launched by the National Urban League is targeted to adolescent and young adult black males. Primary objectives of the NUL program are to promote responsible sexuality, to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies, and to teach participants to assume appropriate parental responsibility for their children. These programs, which were implemented by Urban League affiliates across the country, provide a wide range of educational, training, and support services. Another comprehensive program for African American fathers is the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Development founded by Charles Ballard in Cleveland, Ohio.

Kinship Bonds

One of the most important sources of mobility in African American families has been strong kinship networks. According to conventional wisdom, the extended family has declined sharply in urban areas. However, research studies continue to reveal that the proportion of black extended families continued to increase during the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1970 and 1980, black extended-family households rose from 23 to 28 percent. Preliminary data suggests that, in 1990, two out of five black households were three-generational.[6]

Social-welfare policies and family support programs must adapt to this reality and utilize kinship networks. African American extended families often extend beyond a household and may include significant persons who are not related by blood or marriage. There is a vital need to understand the wide range of support services provided by kinship

networks in such areas as day care, services to unwed mothers, informal adoption, and foster care.[7]

Day care: Kinship networks often provide short-term childcare services, especially for working parents. About two-fifths of working African Americans depend on responsible relatives for day-care services at moderate costs. It was not long ago that federal income regulations penalized families who relied on kin for day care by only allowing childcare deductions for children cared for by nonrelatives. Fortunately, more enlightened policies exist today.

Services to unwed mothers: Kinship networks also provide services and other support to unwed mothers. Nine out of ten babies born to black teenagers live in three-generational households. Research studies have found that adolescent mothers who have the support of kin are more likely to avoid welfare dependency and to achieve healthy development of their children than teenage mothers who are forced to raise their children without assistance from relatives.[8]

Informal Adoption: A major support in African American families since antiquity, this is most often manifested by grandparents or aunts and uncles taking in grandchildren or nieces and nephews to live with them for short or long periods of time.[9] For example, during slavery, thousands of black children, such as Frederick Douglass, were reared by their grandmothers.

The number of informally adopted children living with relatives has risen sharply among African American families over the past two decades. Between 1970 and 1990, the number of black children living in the households of kin rose from 1.3 million (or 13 percent) to 1.6 million (or 16 percent).[10]

Foster care: Despite the fact that black families provide extensive informal adoption and foster-care services, many child-welfare agencies have not targeted, until recently, kinship networks for such services. While 80 percent of the one million blacks who live in households today without either parent present are informally adopted by kin, the remaining 20 percent are in foster care. While the government could not find permanent homes for the 200,000 foster children, the black kinship network succeeded in finding homes for 800,000 children. Yet, children of color still account for the majority of children in foster care in many cities, so there is an urgent need for public policies that provide incentives to relatives to take in children and to systems to use kinship networks as a major resource for placement.

Many community-based groups provide innovative adoption and family-preservation services which reinforce kinship networks. One of the oldest groups is Homes for Black Children (HBC), founded by Sydney Duncan in Detroit, Michigan during the late 1960s. Alarmed by the large number of black children who were available for adoption but who were languishing in foster care, HBC has been determined to demonstrate that there are more than enough families in the African American community willing and able to provide wholesome environments for children who need homes. Over the last ten years HBC has found adoptive homes for over 700 black children. HBC now places greater emphasis on family preservation to prevent unnecessary foster-care placements.

Religious Orientation

Religion tends to play a greater role in the lives of blacks than whites. (According to a 1981 Gallup poll, 67 percent of blacks said that religion was "very important" in their lives; only 55 percent of whites responded similarly.) Moreover, the overwhelming majority of blacks belong to churches and attend them regularly. Based on the National Urban League's Black Pulse Survey of 1979–1980, three-fourths (76 percent) of all blacks belong to churches and two-thirds (67 percent) attend them at least once a month. Furthermore, 71 percent of all black parents send their children to Sunday school regularly.[11]

As the most independent and self-sufficient institution in the African American community, the black church currently provides a wide range of social services directed toward strengthening families and enhancing the development of children and youth. To increase their assistance to inner-city families, increasing numbers of black churches have set up Quality of Life Centers to address the needs of all family members holistically.

Services provided by such centers include day care, preschool programs, nurseries, parenting education, family counseling, remedial education, family planning, substance-abuse prevention, employment training, recreational activities, and youth programs. One of the most prominent centers is the Shiloh Family Life Center of Shiloh Baptist Church in Washington D.C.

Black churches have historically assisted orphans and homeless children. Most of the early black orphanages were founded by black religious institutions. Recently, the disproportionate number of African American children in foster care has alarmed many ministers. The adoption of two adolescent males in 1980 by a black Catholic priest, Father George Clement of Holy Angels Church in Chicago, dramatized the plight of black children in foster care. Subsequently, Father Clement founded the One Church, One Child program, in which each black church made a commitment to adopt at least one foster child. This program has been replicated by churches throughout the nation. (See Billingsley (1992) for case studies of black churches with family support programs.)

African Americans with strong religious orientations have higher social and economic attainment than those with little religious commitment. A recent study of young males in low-income communities sought to identify resiliency factors associated with youth able to attain their goals in spite of deprived backgrounds. This analysis concluded that a deep religious commitment had the strongest correlation with lower rates of school-dropout, delinquency, out-of-wedlock births, and drug abuse.[12] Clearly, black churches can be a major resource for family support practitioners and programs in inner-city communities.

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■ by Maisha Sullivan, M.S.W.

The *Nguzo Saba*: African-Centered Values as Tools for Family Assessment, Support, and Empowerment

For at least the last two decades, social-service practitioners and researchers have attempted to improve services to members of minority populations. African Americans, as the largest and most visible, and perceived as the most problematic, have been the minority group most studied—and remain the group least understood and properly served.

As an African American social worker and educator, professionally trained in mainstream Eurocentric institutions, I have had to struggle to find cultural integrity and relevance in both disciplines. My graduate experience in social work provided a theoretical and conceptual framework poorly suited for studying and working with African American families.

The *Nguzo Saba* (Seven Principles), African values reclaimed by Dr. Maulana Karenga for the African American community, have provided grounding for me as an African-centered social worker working with African American families. These values helped me to survive graduate school, where far too many professors focused on the dysfunction or pathology of African American families. These professors presented cultural analyses, assessment tools, and other practice issues, which I believed were inconsistent with the culture I knew and therefore irrelevant. As a social-change activist, I felt morally and politically compelled to develop a social-work practice based on African-centered values. I practiced *Kujichagulia* (self-determination) and chose not to continue the legacy of allowing others to wrongly define our reality and to provide services not assisting true empowerment.

Dr. Wade Nobles has suggested that the major role of African-centered practitioners in any field is to assist with the re-Africanization of our people: to help resurrect, reclaim, and create African culture and the African personality. Afrocentric practitioners embrace the belief that African culture is distinctive and unique, worthy of protection and emulation. We believe personally and professionally that the African American family is African by nature, American by nurture.

African American culture is not monolithic or stagnant; there is diversity, but within our diversity there is cultural unity. Common experiences—our enslavement, racism, and capitalism—have affected us all.

The *Nguzo Saba* provide tools for assessing the damage enslavement, racism, and capitalism have caused the family. The *Nguzo Saba* are the basis of an African-centered practice. Such practice provides opportunities to assess the strengths and limitations of individuals, families, communities, and of the larger society, and to inspire practices which can strengthen families.

The *Nguzo Saba*

Dr. Karenga introduced the *Nguzo Saba* in 1965, as African communi-tarian values African Americans needed to rebuild and strengthen families, communities, and culture, and to enable African Americans in becoming a self-aware social force in the struggle to control their daily lives. Dr. Karenga studied African cultures and found the *Nguzo Saba* to be their social and moral cement, their foundation and shared orientation.

Umoja (unity): to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.

Kujichagulia (self-determination): to define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves instead of being defined, named, created for, and spoken for by others.

Ujima (collective work and responsibility): to build and maintain our own community, to make our sisters' and brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together.

Ujamaa (cooperative economics): to build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other businesses and to profit from them together.

Nia (purpose): to make our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

Kuumba (creativity): to do always as much as we can, in the way we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than we inherited it.

Imani (faith): to believe with all our hearts in our people, our parents, our teachers, our leaders, and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

The *Nguzo Saba* are best known via the African American holiday, *Kwanzaa* which was also created by Dr. Karenga. It is the only nonreligious, nonheroic, cultural African American holiday and its is celebrated by an estimated 18 million people for 7 days from December 26 to January 1. Each day is a celebration of one of the *Nguzo Saba*. *Kwanzaa* provides an opportunity to introduce and reinforce the *Nguzo Saba*, a time for African Americans to recommit themselves to living with the principles daily.

African American Family Characteristics

One of the primary failures of Eurocentric assessment is its inability or unwillingness to understand or acknowledge the character of the African-American family. The Eurocentric nuclear family is used as the paradigm; deviations from the nuclear model bring cognitive dissonance, confusion, and an inability to provide an accurate assessment. Dr. Karenga has written that "the Black family unit is social rather than biological. The family is inclusive/expansive rather than selective. It is voluntary rather than accidental, or imposed. It eliminates biologically based social absurdities like half-, step-, illegitimate, etc."

There have been many staff meetings and case presentations, where white social workers were perplexed regarding who were "real" family members, who the steps and halves were. While working with families they would push the issue to find out if a given member fit into these contrived categories. The African American family does not naturally define or think of its members in these terms. Amusingly, white caseworkers could not understand the category of play cousins or play siblings, aunts, uncles, etc., in the families they served. Once they found out that these were not biologically-related people, they would minimize their importance or status. African American staff members would express the harmfulness of this, and emphasize that such play relatives are very real and significant members of families. It is often very difficult to tell them apart from so-called biologicals as they participate in and contribute to all family activities.

This family characteristic is very African, not a product of our enslavement as many claim. Professionally, I am always pleased to find an African-American family that maintains this tradition. Family constellation is my first area of assessing cultural retention and strength, areas to strengthen and expand. Conversely, Eurocentric assessment considers the expanded African American family form as enmeshed, dysfunctional, unhealthy.

African-Centered Family Assessment

Family assessment is not an exact science. Assessments are usually based on the service mission of a given institution. The common areas of assessment are: risk (child welfare, domestic violence, and substance abuse), psychosocial development, education, motivation for change, provision of basic needs, support systems, and goals and aspirations.

An African-centered practitioner uses these common areas of assessment, but supplements them with the more holistic *Nguzo Saba*, which provide a cultural and political assessment for measuring societal damages to family integrity and community stability. The *Nguzo Saba* do not isolate the family from the community or its racial group: the family is viewed as in and of the community and nothing is possible without a community context. The community is the basic context for identity, defense, and development. Eurocentric assessment and treatment isolates the family from the community, oftentimes encouraging moving or busing to improve individual and family conditions. Practitioners employing the *Nguzo Saba* assess situations according to the principle of *Umoja*—the family, community, nation, and race. Such practitioners provide opportunities to ascertain families' strengths and weaknesses and to work on sources of problems and provide solutions.

Those who choose to use the *Nguzo Saba*, must find creative and purposeful ways to incorporate them into their personal and professional lives. The practitioner should aim to enable families to incorporate the principles and values of the *Nguzo Saba* into their daily lives.

Umoja (unity): Discuss and assess the emotional climate of the family, the level of stability and supportiveness. Assess causes of estrangement, types of relationships, and ability and willingness to maintain healthy relationships within the family and community.

Kujichagulia (self-determination): Assess level of family motivation, personal, and collective empowerment, and interdependence. Look for oppressive and coercive relationships and the silencing of the voices of the vulnerable (seniors, women, children, and disabled). Assess ability to navigate external systems in the best interest of the family (schools, housing, social services, and health care).

Ujima (cooperative work and responsibility): Assess cooperativeness of family members, coping strategies, ability and willingness to extend, nurture, and support.

Ujamaa (cooperative economics): Assess shared economic base and reality of the family, cooperativeness and sharing of limited resources. Assess provision of material necessities, financial commitments, lifestyle choices, misplaced priorities, and material excesses.

Nia (purpose): Determine aspirations and goals of family, level of motivation and commitment to self-selected goals.

Kuumba (creativity): Assess healthy and productive ways of building and enhancing the family and community environment and the level of commitment to making both home and community conducive to psychosocial development and security.

Imani (faith): Determine belief level and commitment to family and community defense, development, and stability, the ability to provide the social context in which members can have an effective and positive grasp of themselves, society, and the world. Assess level and areas of spirituality.

In conclusion, the field of family support must not rely entirely on the Eurocentric deficit and dysfunction approaches for working with African Americans families. Culturally-relevant and culturally-empowering practices exist and more must be developed to enable families and communities to improve their situations. African Americans have the right to exist as a distinct culture. Deprived of culture, our field pursues folly, as in the African proverb: The fool who whitens ebony will also darken ivory.

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■ by Erica E. Tollett

Public Policy and African American Families: Employment, Education, Community Development

Lack of employment and inadequate income continue to position African Americans as a disadvantaged group in this country. For decades, the black unemployment rate has been twice the rate for whites. The employment status of African American adults is the driving force behind the poverty and instability of black communities, and leads to poor educational and health outcomes for children. Unemployment and inadequate income account for declining results on all social indicators of well-being.

Lately, it is popular to talk about child poverty as if children were in a position to obtain a job that pays a sufficient wage and to lift themselves out of poverty. Adult employment, however, is the real issue. The most significant indicator of the status of children is the employment status of their parent(s). The welfare of children and families derives from the ability of adults to earn enough to provide the necessary goods and services.

Furthermore, for many, employment builds self-esteem. This self-esteem is often manifested by becoming an active and strong advocate for the child. Employed parents who feel a sense of control over their lives are more likely to demand quality educational programs for their children.

Parents with adequate income are in a better position to learn for themselves how to enhance their children's development or to know how to get information that will help their children develop intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally.

Public policies targeted towards helping children must consider and include the needs of parents. The lives of economically disadvantaged children are improved when their parents' lives are improved. Programs targeted to at-risk children and families are most successful when those programs focus on the parent. For many black families, President Clinton's promise to revitalize the economy and create jobs will be key to increasing the well-being of black children and families.

Employment Rates

For more than three decades black unemployment has been twice the rate of whites.[1] In 1989, the nation experienced its lowest unemployment rate since the early 1970s, 5.3 percent. However, black unemployment averaged 11.4 percent compared to 4.5 percent for whites. In 1990, the average unemployment rate for African Americans was 11.3 percent; the rate for whites was 4.7 percent. In 1991, the average was 12.4 percent compared to 6.0 percent for whites. And in 1992, African Americans had an average unemployment rate of 14.1 percent while it was 6.5 percent for whites.

The Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act puts the interim goal for full employment at not more than four percent unemployment for the general population (with the rate later reduced to three percent). Economists disagree on what level of unemployment should be considered full employment; but there can be no disagreement with the fact that the black unemployment rate is too high. Congressman Augustus Hawkins, former Chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, has stated that "the black unemployment rate is unacceptable."[2] And, G.D. Jaynes maintains that "blacks have a strong interest—stronger than the white majority—in national policies that hold unemployment low and keep the economy expanding vigorously."[3]

Who Benefits from Family Policy?

For parents to benefit from federal family-policy initiatives they must be in the workforce. For example, the employment of parents is a key consideration for childcare services and legislation. The Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990 provides federal funds for grants, contracts, and certificates for childcare services for low-income families in which a parent works or attends a job-training or educational program. The At-Risk Child Care Act provides childcare for low-income working families. The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 requires employers with 50 or more employees to provide workers with unpaid, job-protected twelve-weeks leave for the birth or adoption of a child, for their own serious illness, or for the serious illness of an immediate family member. These three important pieces of legislation help children by assisting parents.

Barriers to Employment

The typical reasons offered for the limited employment of African Americans are poor or inadequate education, lack of adequate skills and seniority, slow

job-growth, and the shift to a service economy. Some also believe that new immigrants take low-wage or low-status jobs that many African Americans are unwilling to take.

But American life—from housing to the criminal justice system—is still plagued by racial bias. Even when African Americans have the requisite education, skills, and seniority to compete in fast-growing industries, they are underemployed: racism and discrimination hinder employment. Cases filed by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) illustrate that discrimination in employment persists in American society. Researchers have documented that many employers are racially biased and deny African Americans employment. Kirschenman and Neckerman have stated that their interviews at Chicago-area businesses show that employers view inner-city workers, especially black men, as unstable, uncooperative, dishonest, and uneducated.[5]

Economist Dr. David H. Swinton, Dean of the School of Business at Jackson State University, says that even jobs are not permanent solutions to the poor economic status of African Americans.[6] He maintains that the reason that the economy functions so poorly for African Americans is that they do not own major businesses and do not have capital. In his view, African Americans need to be in a position not only to hold jobs but to generate jobs.

The Impact on Communities

The high rate of unemployment among African Americans has destabilized families and communities, which in turn has disadvantaged black children. Children thrive best in a family with both parents present. Both girls and boys benefit from experiencing male and female role models. Unemployed men are less likely to marry and form families than are employed men; and families headed by single women are more likely to be poor.

Unemployment contributes to the physical breakdown of communities. Joblessness promotes neglect and hopelessness. In neighborhoods where adults loiter on street corners and in vacant lots, unable to make needed repairs, physical deterioration is accelerated. Blighted urban and rural areas foster high rates of unemployment.

Professor Felton Earls, at the Harvard School of Public Health, notes that overcrowded, boarded-up housing, in areas with high unemployment and many single-parent, female-headed households, reflects the neglect of neighborhoods. And in such neighborhoods one also often finds high rates of homicide. Earls maintains that issues such as quality housing and employment practices must be addressed because "neglect of neighborhoods is contributing to. . .urban violence."

Many male juvenile-offenders are reared without the influence of a responsible adult male. Often, the men who could have been available for them are in prison. For example, according to the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, in the nation's capital, on any day in 1991, 42 percent of black males between the ages of 18 and 35 were incarcerated, awaiting trial, under an arrest warrant, on probation, or on parole;[8] in Baltimore, Maryland, the figure was 56 percent.[9] Much of this close contact with the criminal justice system was due to drug-related crimes (although according to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 1991 data, 72.4 percent of illicit drug users in this country were white while 17 percent were African American).

Economically Empowered Parents and the Education of Children

Communities with low unemployment are usually more stable and parents in these communities are more likely to provide the necessary guidance for their children. Institutions such as schools are more likely to function well in communities of workers. Parents with incomes can plan for the future; they have more choices for their children than do parents without income. They can save, invest, and purchase. Children generally have better educational outcomes when they are part of stable families with adequate incomes. The relationship between income and education was understood in 1965 when Head Start was implemented, a program of comprehensive services targeted to preschool children from low-income families. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Chapter I program is another program that seeks to address the educational needs of children disadvantaged by their parent's low-income.

It is critical that parents understand the developmental needs of young children and demand that schools meet those needs. NBCDI's publication *Safeguards: Guidelines for Establishing Programs for Four-Year-Olds in the Public Schools* provides guidance for effective early childhood programs for young African American children. Black parents must understand that it is their responsibility to ensure that educational settings and instruction for black children are developmentally appropriate and

culturally relevant.[10]

The term "inner-city schools" has become a code word for schools with a large minority population, assumed to be doing a poor job. However, education in the United States in general is in need of major reform. The need for change prompted the release in 1991 of *America 2000: An Education Strategy*, containing six goals, adopted by former President Bush and the nation's governors, for all schools to attain for their students. The 102nd Congress tried to respond to the need for reform but could not agree on how best to improve schools, and consequently was unable to pass the legislation that could have provided federal leadership for beginning improvements.

Public policies that address the educational needs of black students must make improving public schools a top priority. With regard to the issue of school choice, policies that undermine the effectiveness of public schools will have an especially detrimental effect on black children. Since the American economy does not adequately support black parents, not enough resources would be available for the large numbers of black parents who would need or want to buy alternative education. Furthermore, since the majority of all children attend public schools, it is in the public's best interest to improve the ability of the public system to serve all children.

New York Congressman Major Owens, chair of the House Subcommittee on Select Education and Civil Rights, says Americans rank education as one of the top four issues requiring immediate attention by both the 103rd Congress and the Clinton administration. To help improve education research serving the nation's public education system, Owens has proposed the Educational Research, Development, and Dissemination Excellence Act. The bill supports a university-based system of research and practice to improve public education. According to Owens, "African Americans must build an overwhelming campaign for education which is as focused and committed as the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and 1960s."

Conclusion

The fact that the United States has consistently tolerated double-digit unemployment of African Americans and the high incarceration rates of its black male population between the ages of 18 and 35 is a demonstration of its lack of concern for black children. Job training and education, economic development, and the elimination of discriminatory hiring practices of adult men and women will do much to improve the status of black children in America. Aggressively increasing the numbers of African Americans in managerial positions and those who own businesses will do even more to empower and strengthen black communities. Increasing the number of African Americans who are in policymaking positions would help shape policy discussions in directions that would benefit African Americans. Whoever has control over the public discourse has control over how issues are viewed: employment is critical to participation in the national debate on social policy.

Notes

[1] JAYNES, G.D. and WILLIAMS, Jr., R.M., (eds.) (1989) *A Common Destiny: Blacks and American Society*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press. p.308.

[2] Telephone interview with Congressman Augustus Hawkins, December 30, 1992.

[3] JAYNES, G.D. and WILLIAMS, Jr., R.M. (eds.) (1989). p. 294.

[4] MEISENHEIMER, J.R. (1990) Black college graduates in the labor market, 1979 and 1989. *Monthly Labor Review*. November 1990:13.

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[6] Telephone interview with Dr. David Swinton on December 21, 1992. See also Swinton, D.H.(1991) The economic status of black Americans during the 1980s: A decade of limited progress. *The State of Black America 1990*. Janet Dewart (ed.). New York, NY: National Urban League.

[7] Telephone interview with Dr. Felton Earls, December 30, 1992 and presentation from the conference, *The Impact of Violence on Infants, Toddlers and Their Families: Research, Treatment, and Prevention*, December 4, 1992, in Washington, D.C.

[8] HARRISTON, K. (1992) Going to jail is 'rite of passage' for many D.C. men, report says. *The Washington Post*, April 18, 1992:B3.

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The National Black Child Development Institute's (NBCDI) advocacy on behalf of black children stresses the importance of quality programs for children and emphasizes the importance of both parents. Parents are key to ensuring that children receive a proper education. NBCDI views its role as developing and increasing parents' ability to care for their children.

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■ by Bette Wilson, M.Ed.

African American Academic Achievement: Issues, Answers, and Promising Strategies

According to the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), African American academic underachievement is one of the most pernicious effects of American inequality.[1] It is both a cause of and a consequence of historical and contempory discrimination. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between academic underachievement and unemployment, crime, drug abuse, and mortality.[2]

Many approaches have been used to account for the educational discrepancies between minority and white children. One such approach was put forth in the April 1992 issue of *Atlantic Monthly* by social psychologist Claude Steele. Steele writes: "More than half of black college students fail to complete their degree work for reasons that have little to do with innate ability or environmental conditioning. The problem is that they are undervalued, in ways that are sometimes subtle and sometimes not."[3]

Referring to his experiences as an African American in American schools Steele suspects "a culprit that can undermine black achievement as effectively as a lock on the schoolhouse door. The culprit I see is stigma, the endemic devaluation many blacks face in our society's schools." Steele suggests that the relationship between devaluation of African American students and their performance in school has not been given enough credence.

A personal example of devaluation offered in Steele's article prompted a vivid recollection of a similar incident I experienced many years ago. As a transfer student from an all-black high school in the South to a large, urban, predominantly-white high school in the Midwest, I realized immediately that my previous schooling had been devalued when I saw the schedule my new counselor had prepared *for* me. My transcript indicated that I was an A student with all course work in the college-preparatory category (there was no other category at my old school). He appeared to be extremely suspicious when he noticed that I was an eleven-year-old ninth-grader. He placed me in the secretarial track without consulting me, my mother, or my previous school. This meant that I would not take algebra, English literature, geometry, or any of the other courses required of college-bound students. When my mother, a special-education teacher, confronted my counselor about his reasons for excluding me from the college-preparatory course of study, he said, "This schedule is best for little Bette." My mother informed him that she knew what was best for little Bette and that she expected him to prepare a new schedule, immediately, for her approval. He hesitantly agreed flashing a smug smile that said, "You'll be sorry."

But, in the end, she wasn't sorry. This story illustrates both devaluation and also a means of redressing it through parent involvement. I was extremely fortunate to have had a family that monitored my education and the educators who delivered it. Many parents lack the skills to be advocates for their children. Those among us who know how to navigate the system must share this information so that more parents will become effectively involved in the education of their children and those children will be better educated as a result.

* * *

I sense a certain caving in of hope in America that problems of race can be solved. Since the sixties, when race relations held promise for the dawning of a new era, the issue has become one whose persistence causes 'problem fatigue'—resignation to an unwanted condition of life.[4]

There is a suspicion, writes Steele, that fatigue numbs us to this deepening crisis and its implications for the education of African Americans. American schools at all levels—elementary through university—demonstrate the reality that blacks and whites live in separate worlds. With further scrutiny one sees that these worlds are unequal in both the education that takes place in schools and in the level of achievement of the students who attend them.

Steele finds that socioeconomics aside, test scores for African Americans are close to those of whites their age when they begin school. However, the longer they stay in school, the more they fall behind. By sixth grade African American students in many schools find themselves two full grade levels behind whites in achievement. This pattern is nearly the same for middle-

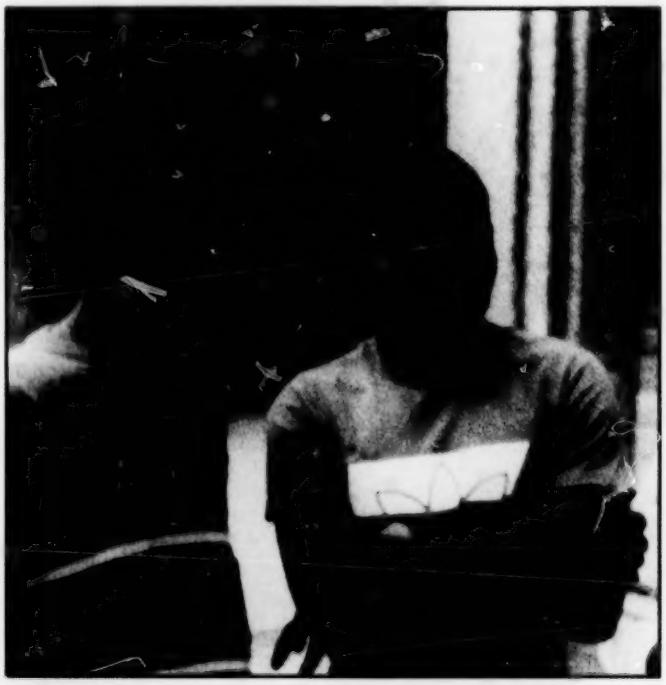
income as for lower-income students. Something besides inherent capability has to be involved. That something else could be of modest importance—a barrier that simply adds its effect to that of other disadvantages—or it could be pivotal, such that were it corrected, other disadvantages would lose their effect. That something else has to do with the process of identifying with school. Steele believes that the failure of American schools to encourage African Americans to believe in education as a route to success in life, may be the root of African American achievement problems "Doing well in school requires that you believe that school achievement can be a promising basis of self-esteem, and that belief needs constant reaffirmation even for advantaged students. Tragically, I believe, the lives of black Americans are haunted by a specter that threatens this belief and the identification that develops from it at every level of schooling."[5]

* * *

People are valued or devalued by the images society has of them. People are classified by these images. Some images are explicit; many are implied by what we see and hear around us: in advertising, media discussions about African American competence, resources (textbooks, curricula) used for schooling, and society's assessment of ethnic art and culture. In most of these areas, African American images are not the ones revered by the larger population. Society's images categorize people and these categorizations determine how they function. When you have been categorized, catalogued, and devalued you wear a shroud of invisibility.

Steele offers an account of how valuing students can make the difference in academic achievement.

"In the mid-seventies black students in Philip Uri Treisman's early calculus courses at the University of California at Berkeley consistently fell to the bottom of every class. To help, Treisman developed the Mathematics Workshop Program which, in a surprisingly short time, reversed their fortunes, causing them to outperform their white and Asian counterparts. And although it is only a freshman program, black students who take it graduate at a rate comparable to the Berkeley average. Its central technique is group study of calculus concepts. But it is also wise; it does things that allay the racial vulnerabilities of these students. Stressing their potential to learn, it recruits them to a challenging "honors" workshop tied to their first calculus course. Building on their skills, the workshop gives difficult work, often beyond course content, to students with even modest preparation (some of their math SATs dip to the 300s). Working together, students soon understand that everyone knows something and nobody knows everything, and learning is speeded through shared understanding. The wisdom of these tactics is their subtext . . . 'You are valued in this program because of your academic potential—regardless of your current skill level. You have no more to fear than the next person, and since the work is difficult, success is a credit to your ability, and a setback is reflection only of the challenge.' The black students' double vulnerability around failure—the fear that they lack ability, and the dread that they will be devalued—is thus reduced. They can relax and achieve."[6]



But most educational discussions of black American students' school achievement have focused primarily on explaining failure, rather than on how to encourage success. Special efforts to improve the academic outcomes of African American and other minority children, initiated in the sixties, have demonstrated some positive results, however, for urban youngsters, there has been little significant change in levels of academic achievement.

* * *

Nationally, there are now some ambitious educational initiatives, for example, the Illinois Urban Initiative and its Urban Education Partnership Program. The Partnership Program makes grants to support programs and activities that aim at improving student outcomes in urban school districts which are characterized by significant racial and ethnic diversity, students with limited proficiency in English, and large numbers of low-income students. Funded by ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act), these grants are developed by local schools with the building principal as the project director. All grantees must establish partnerships with external agencies or organizations that will assist them in the successful implementation of their programs. The goal is systemic change resulting in the improvement of academic achievement for students in urban schools. Woven into the fabric of this initiative is the value of parents, families, and communities. The climate in these schools is one of synergy, respect, and renewed hope. This program allows urban schools the latitude to focus on a problem without the usual bureacratic redtape. Joe Frattaroli, manager of the Urban and Ethnic Education Unit of the Illinois Board of Education says, "You tell us the problems you're having and how you would solve them and what resources you need. Eacn grant is uniquely packaged to the school. It's a bottom-up approach to schooling, as opposed to top-down. The grants are for systemic, institutional change."

Grants are awarded to local schools, not school districts. Programs are designed and implemented at the local level as well. A resource person, with decision-making powers, is assigned to

each program and is also a member of the Urban and Ethnic Education Unit staff. Their job is to do whatever it takes to ensure the program's success. Grant sums are modest: no school receives more than $30,000 per year for two years.

An external evaluation revealed that 80 percent of the programs were operating after the grant period ended; school districts had redirected existing funds to keep the programs in place; parent involvement increased significantly across the programs.

Improved student achievement is the overall goal, however, says Frattaroli. "Some successes cannot be measured on a standardized test." Other significant results have included increased attendance, accurate homework submitted when due, better grades, increased self- and family-esteem and more active parent involvement.

* * *

A variety of strategies have been used by the Partnership Grants schools.

North Middle School in Alton instituted a tutoring/recreation program called Prime Time. It operated three days a week from 7–9 pm. The program provided an opportunity to do school work and to be with friends in a supervised environment. The first hour was an intensive homework preparation and tutoring time; the second hour was devoted to fun. More than 390 students participated, with an average of 125 to 169 participating on any given night.

Crete-Monee Junior High School's program sought to increase the rate of assignment/homework completion to 95 percent or above. The staff, in partnership with the University Park Cable Commission produced homework videotapes on such topics as how to write a research paper and studying for the state-mandated constitution test. A parent-education series on parents' roles in student academic success was also produced and scheduled for public viewing. The homework and parent series became part of the school's videotape library.

Emerson Elementary School, in Cairo, a poor rural community with urban-like characteristics and a 98 percent African American student population, struggled with strategies to improve delayed language development. With grant monies, it provided training for its kindergarten teachers. A speech pathologist modeled language during demonstration lessons. Parents were invited on field trips where they began to model language with their children. A side benefit for the families was the opportunity to visit places they may not otherwise have been able to go.

Robeson High School, in Chicago, was concerned about its high suspension and dropout rates, and so established a partnership with the John Marshall Law School in which law students trained teachers and students in mediation skills and the school set up a student mediation board that met every day. Fifty-eight students went to the board with problems the first year. All were successfully mediated, without recidivism.

Schools participating in this initiative have historically been at the bottom of the academic scale. Programs such as the ones described above are providing an impetus for whole districts to think about how to involve parents and encourage academic success in heretofore underachieving students. Programs like this are establishing a sense of pride among students who participate, their parents, teachers and administrators, and their community.

Test scores are up, in some cases dramatically, and as Joe Fratarolli has said, "These schools didn't raise scores by eliminating the bottom third. They raised the level of the curriculum . . . and challenged the kids at the bottom, who have no tradition of learning. We constantly challenge our athletes to achieve more. Why don't we do the same with our students?"[7]

Notes

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[3] STEELE, CLAUDE (1992). Race and the schooling of black Americans. The Atlantic Monthly. April. pp. 68-87.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Urban initiative. *Curriculum Review*. Vol. 29, No. 6. February 1990. p.6.

Author's note: The spark that ignited my excitement about this topic was Black Adolescent Academic Achievement: Real and Apparent Antecedants, *a paper by Carolyn Murray, University of California, Riverside, and Halford Fairchild, Association of Black Psychologists, Washington, D.C.*

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■ by Harriette Pipes McAdoo, Ph.D.

It Takes a Whole Vill

This proverb is a truism that extends from the continent of Africa to the lives of today's children in America. African Americans are a communal people who take this proverb literally. It is not just economic adversity that enables us to develop means of caring for our children: these approaches are the result of centuries of raising children in communities of color. Through the adversities of the middle passage, the enslavement experiences, the hope that the Civil Rights Movement brought, and into the present: the challenges are as great today as they have ever been.

Proverbs are passed from one generation to another and they transmit expressed and unexpressed values. When wisdom is repeated over time it is internalized. Proverbs tell stories of the past, relay messages, pass morals to the next generation, and provide means of conflict resolution. Proverbs reflect worldviews which guide persons to embrace beliefs and goals that have been accepted by the group.

The challenges of today lead us to draw upon age-old traditions and sayings. We will learn to rely upon ourselves, to help establish policies and programs that will ultimately benefit the whole family.

Extended-family arrangements are the traditional African American support system. While assimilation of ethnic groups into society has been considered normal for American ethnic groups, structural conditions have prevented most African American families from being assimilated or even accepted. African American families and communities have therefore felt it necessary to form protective shields around their children and young adults, to protect them throughout their socio-emotional development.

Historically, African American extended families lived together. Now, most African Americans live in separate dwellings, but they are involved in patterns of mutual emotional support, visits, and help exchanges. Patterns of religious attendance are supportive of these extended arrangements. This cultural pattern has transcended mobility and exists at all economic levels.

Extended-family support is found in most families, but kin helping arrangements are more active when mothers are single, when families are facing greater stress, and when economic resources are more limited. Socioeconomic status and family structure are directly related, because, when mothers are parenting alone, resources for raising children are more scarce. When the income of the father is removed from the family, the mother and their children have a difficult time maintaining economic stability. Extended-family support and help exchanges mitigate the impact of stressors on families in such situations.

Extended-family members give and receive help from each other in the areas of childcare, household tasks, financial support, eating and sleeping arrangements of young children, and giving of advice and mutual support. In African American families, family boundaries are fluid and gender roles are flexible. Exchanges are reciprocal: the resources of one family unit are available to other family units. This causes tension at times, but uncertainty about the future keeps members involved in these exchanges.

Mutually supportive networks extend beyond family units into communities. African American culture is child-centered and children are considered our most vital investment for the future. We must secure their entrance into the world in a manner that we would like for all of our children. Children's self-esteem and their aspirations to succeed are maintained by supportive families and communities.

Parents and members of their communities attempt to protect children from external adversities including racially based influences. Part of this is racial socialization: parents preparing their children to deal with being devalued when they go beyond family and community boundaries. Racial socialization provides children with the skills necessary to function well in both mainstream and African American communities. Children and parents draw on the resources of the community as the child goes out to school, to work, and to live in a society that does not value people of color.

The programs presented in this article will show how "villages" all around the country are working hard to provide support for children and their families. Through the support of in-home care, by educating adolescents who become mothers too soon, through recreational and supportive programs, and through religious groups in the community, we are spreading out our protective shields to ensure that our children will survive. We need to make sure that all communities have the resources to protect our

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age to Raise a Child

children and to provide necessary emotional, social, fiscal, and educational resources to help them reach their potential and to enable them to be able to bring up the next generation.

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■ **by Christine Vogel**

The five programs profiled in the following article can be seen as building upon the strengths of African philosophy to offer services to the African American populations they serve. Some programs explicitly incorporate Afrocentric components into their programmatic approach (Walbridge Caring Communities). Others support African American families without a specifically Afrocentric focus to their programming. Not all of the programs profiled in this article are typical family support programs; but all seek to empower their participants, to build on their strengths, and to strengthen both communities and families, thereby demonstrating the proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child." The African American Caucus believes that taken together these programs broaden the definition of family support for African American families by recognizing that both African and African American cultures are child-centered and communal and that they operate according to the principle "We are, therefore, I am."

Walbridge Caring Communities Program
5019 Alcott Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63120

Khatib Waheed, Director
Barney Brown, Site Coordinator

Founded in 1988 with the support of the Danforth Foundation, the Walbridge Caring Communities Program (WCCP) is an initiative of four state agencies in collaboration with the St. Louis City Public Schools. The program's mission is to provide integrated, comprehensive health and social services to the children and families in the community which surrounds the Walbridge Elementary School. The community numbers 29,000 people; 85 percent are African American and 37 percent are single-parent households. The community struggles with poverty, violence, unemployment, and the drug culture. WCCP currently serves about 100 of the most at-risk families.

Characterized by a strong family orientation and the concept of community empowerment, WCCP's Afrocentric service model seeks to re-create within this community a "village" that can nurture its children.

The WCCP philosophy emphasizes "spirituality, self-identity, unity, nonviolent conflict resolution, and ceremonies for youth connected to maturation," values drawn from the seven principles (*Nguzo Saba*) (see page 6 in this issue).

Services are offered in-home, at Walbridge School (preschool through grade 5), and at a community school which offers adult education and after-school programs for neighborhood youth. Services include case management, an in-school, day treatment program for troubled youth, substance-abuse counseling, crisis intervention, before- and after-school childcare, school nursing services, pre-employment training and job placement, academic counseling, and teen leadership development.

The program uses an Afrocentric curriculum in classroom presentations designed to reinforce self-esteem, prevent drug abuse, and build a positive self-identity. Site coordinator Barney Brown says that WCCP encourages participants to come up with ways in which the seven principles can be put into action. As an example, he mentions the food co-op which was organized in 1991 with seed money provided by the Danforth Foundation. Operated as a non-profit business by its members, the *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics) Food Co-op helps meet the community's nutritional needs at affordable prices.

"These principles [the *Nguzo Saba*] are universal, they're basic human values," says Brown. "Our objective is to intensify and enhance people's awareness of them, so they'll consciously strive to maintain unity within their families, the school, the community, and the nation."

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New Haven Family Alliance
5 Science Park South
New Haven, CT 06511
203/786-5920

Mustafa Abdul-Salaam
Executive Director

Collaboration is a key word for the philosophical, programmatic, and advocacy approaches of the New Haven Family Alliance. Begun as a demonstration site of Connecticut's Child Welfare Reform Initiative, the Alliance provides child-centered, family-focused case management services; contracts with community agencies to develop and operate family support centers; and promotes the integration of services within the community. Services are provided in an effort to preserve families and to prevent the need for substitute care. Goals are to develop creative solutions to the many problems faced by families and to establish evaluation procedures for tracking success. As an advocate for families, the Alliance works to integrate services and provide leadership in the development of a community infrastructure that links and empowers families, schools, and community-based organizations. Two neighborhood family support centers operate as part of an early intervention and prevention component of the New Haven Family Alliance, with services available to all neighborhood families.

"If you extend the 'it-takes-a-whole-village-to-raise-a-child' concept, you come to the understanding that it takes the whole society to raise a child," says Executive Director Mustafa Abdul-Salaam. "It's not just the family, or the school or the neighborhood, but all these and more, which highlights the importance of collaboration among those who are providing and those being provided for. . .We want to create an environment in which parents are consistently 'at the table' when it comes to making decisions about what their needs are," says Abdul-Salaam.

One way in which the Alliance is working to create effective parent advocates is through the development of its Center for Parents and Neighborhood Development. Geared to educate, train, and mobilize parents as a force to meet their own needs, the center encourages the formation of neighborhood parent organizations, as well as the development of collaborative relationships between parents and local teachers' organizations. "We want parents to realize that they have to develop the neighborhood in which they live: as they recognize the value of that process, they begin to bring more people to the center and that builds both a sense of environment and a power base," says Abdul-Salaam. The Alliance provides technical assistance and programming support for this ongoing effort; its goal is to eventually have the community take over, the parents, rather than the service providers, functioning as the primary power holders.

Abdul-Salaam regards empowerment as an issue of economics more than race (over 50 percent of New Haven's children live in poverty). At the same time, he readily acknowledges that many African American families are in our society's lowest economic groups. "Empowerment is correct for everyone, and our focus is on those who are disempowered and disenfranchised, particularly those who live in limited conditions. African Americans have been particularly disenfranchised in this society. . .[As a nation] we need to recognize that human beings are developed within families. Then the family becomes the major institution that is protected and supported in this country."

New Salem Missionary Baptist Church
Columbus, Ohio 43224
614/267-2536

Rev. Keith Troy, Minister

This 83-year-old church ministers to a mixed-income congregation of nearly 3,500. About 1,750 children and adults are served by church programs, which include full-service day care; a latchkey program; after-school activities; Bible-study groups for ages kindergarten through adult; a community redevelopment program; a black-college fair; a food pantry; and summer recreational and job-skills training programs. Many of the church endeavors represent cooperative efforts with small businesses and minority entrepreneurs, the public schools, and several other churches in the Columbus area.

"Our primary thrust is youth, but we are attuned to all family needs," says Rev. Keith Troy, as he speaks about the many programs available at New Salem Baptist Church. "I like to think we provide for people from the cradle to the grave."

Rev. Troy believes that all of the projects undertaken by New Salem Baptist Church are instrumental in supporting the diverse needs of his congregation; and he points out that about half the participants in many of these projects are not church members, a clear indication that these programs also serve the needs of the community-at-large. He cites two youth projects as particularly effective. Project RISE UP, an educational and recreational summer program for children ages 6–12 created jobs for ten community residents last summer (over 100 youth participated). In Project ADVENTURE, a summer job-training and employment program for youth, ages 14–15, young people were hired by and paid by the church to work for small businesses in the area. Once participants turned 16, many of those businesses hired them for regular summer jobs. The program also encouraged financial responsibility by helping participants open custodial savings accounts, matching up to one-half of their earnings. They receive this money when they graduate from high school.

Another critical focus of church activity has been New Salem's Academy for Young Black Males, which provides an inspirational component to education. Mentors—positive male role models—meet with program participants twice-weekly after school and on Saturdays for field trips.

Rev. Troy dreams of designing another training program, which focuses on family dynamics and communications skills. "I want to have a hand in helping men take their rightful places as nurturers and respected human beings. I want to teach them how to become more engaged with their families. I also want to help women become empowered, to understand their multiple roles as woman, wife, mother, and Christian."

Rev. Troy says he approaches issues with a belief that individuals and families must learn to become empowered. "We can't rely on others, and we can't blame others for our problems," he asserts. "The real strength of these programs is that they've been designed

with the input of those who participate which has given people a real sense of ownership; it's given them back their self-esteem."

Keysville, The Volunteer City
P.O. Box 159
Keysville, Georgia 30816
706/547-3007

Emma Gresham, Mayor

In 1985, Emma Gresham retired from teaching and moved back home to Keysville, Georgia. With a population of only 400, 90 percent of whom are African American, this city had completely vanished from political maps for more than 50 years. The community had no industrial base, no school, and more than half its adult population was functionally illiterate. With little to sustain any sense of community, the young people were increasingly at-risk. After a four-year court fight, Gresham was successfully elected mayor and organized the Concerned Citizens of Keysville. Keysville is one of five communities piloting Georgia's Certified Literate Community Program, with a ten-year goal of achieving literacy for a majority of the community.

"The children in this town used to be ashamed," says Mayor Gresham. "After all, we don't even have our own school. But they've learned to stand up and say that this is a town in which everyone is someone."

Having literally resurrected Keysville from the forgotten, Mayor Gresham can point to every aspect of the town's gradual resurgence—starting with installing street lights and a water system—as an area of strength for its children and families. She is proudest of the dedicated volunteerism of its citizens; their commitment has allowed Keysville to take charge of its future, guided by the ideal that education is the key to making the city a good place for young people to live and to raise their children.

The town gets every generation involved in the educational process, either as volunteers or as participants. Its after-school tutorial and recreation program operates daily. Adults who are certified teachers volunteer their time to run this program. Peer tutoring is encouraged. About 25 adults currently participate in twice-weekly literacy classes designed to lead toward high school equivalency diplomas. And now, Mayor Gresham is working on establishing an elementary school. (Children currently travel 18 miles to the nearest school.) "I want a better quality of life for our children," asserts Mayor Gresham. "We can save the state and the nation from crime and illiteracy if we can direct the children right when they're young."

Genesis School
Family Unit Literacy Project
3831 East 43rd Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64130
816/921-0775

Deborah Allen, Program Director

The Family Unit Literacy Project at Genesis School, which began in 1988, addresses the concerns of teen parenting and illiteracy. Viewing these issues as a "total family concern," services include prenatal care, communications skills, academic help, values development, and multi-generational parenting issues. The program also incorporates career development, from comportment and assertiveness to resume writing, interviewing skills and job applications. "We do a lot of role playing and try to use every type of life experience as a source for the program," says director Deborah Allen. "Each person serves as a resource to others."

One of Allen's primary goals has been to help young parents realize that they have gifts which can be shared with their family and community. An important part of the program's strength lies in the participants' sense of themselves as part of the Genesis School community. Many of the girls who are involved in the FUL program encourage their siblings to enroll at Genesis School. "They develop a standard of acceptance for their lives and no longer take their gifts for granted. That path becomes a realistic path for others in the family," she says. The outreach provided by two student-produced radio programs is a further effort to break down the isolation experienced by teen parents and their families.

In operation since 1975, Genesis School is an inner-city alternative junior high school assisting youth 11–19 who have dropped out of public school. Genesis provides educational, counseling, and prevocational services through a case-management approach. Its nationally recognized Writer's Project emphasizes community and cultural relevance, while incorporating specific youth concerns. The school operates year-round with an enrollment of about 100 students. Another 350 youth and family members are served through Family Unit Literacy case-management services. Teen parents and their families (including grandparents and siblings) receive educational, counseling, job placement and support services. "We carefully assess family needs and set both short- and long-term goals. Teens and their families have become empowered; they've learned to minimize crises both at home and in the workplace, and they've been able to get and maintain jobs," says Allen.

She attributes Genesis School's success working with inner-city students to its regarding its students holistically and helping them appreciate who they are. "The students here recognize that they are not alone. We're dealing with love here; there's a real karma and spirituality at work in this place, no two ways about it!"

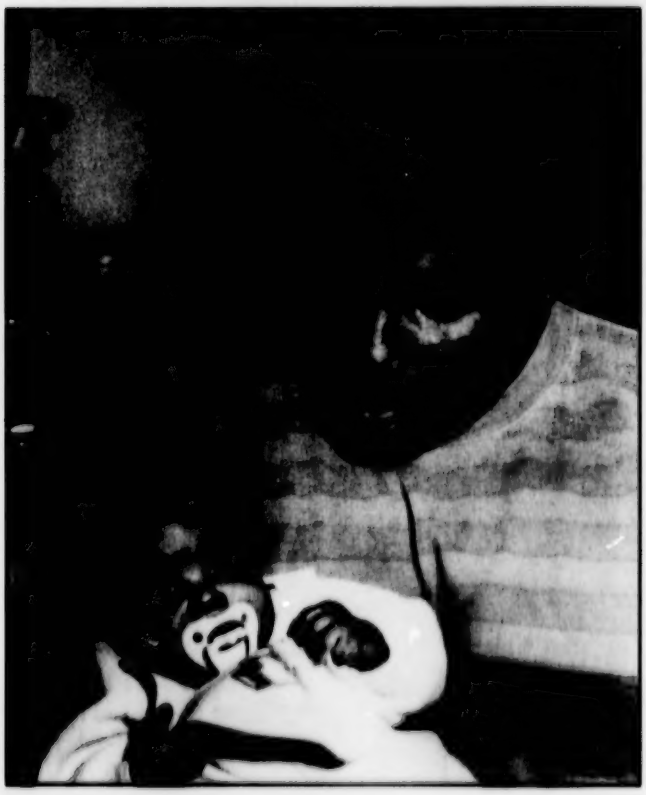
Conclusion

It takes a whole village to raise a child. This African proverb is offered to promote cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness in those providing services to African American families and communities. The programs profiled are intended to be a springboard for discussion of an Afrocentric perspective on family-support service delivery. All of them are empowering programs which seek to strengthen African American families and communities. The African American Caucus acknowledges that these programs are not the *alpha* and *omega* of service delivery, but a beginning for defining family support for African American families. In rural as well as urban areas these programs are creating villages which nurture and protect our children and our families, thus contributing to a brighter future for all of us.

Christine Vogel is staff writer for the Family Resource Coalition.

■ by John L. McAdoo, Ph.D.

Understanding Fathers: Human Services Perspectives in Theory and Practice



We are just beginning to document the roles that fathers play in families. The objectives of this paper are to explore the roles fathers play in the family, and to present African American and mainstream researchers' and family practitioners' perspectives on these roles as well as the implications of different perspectives.

Identifying Fathers' Roles

If the main role of the family is the development of healthy adults who contribute to society, then what are the main roles of fathers in families? In previous studies, we have identified the roles of provider, protector, decision-maker, child socializer and educator, and nurturer of mother. We have evaluated the few studies on father-family relationships and found that fathers who are able to fulfill the provider role—that is to bring in sufficient income to support the basic needs of the family such as for food, clothing, shelter, and education—are more likely to be active in performing other tasks in rearing their children and are more likely to have stable families where the children grow and develop into competent adults.[1]

In African American families, often, both parents must work in order for the family to have adequate economic resources. In some families, the father has adjusted to sharing the role of provider and decision-maker. A number of studies have found that African-American mothers and fathers share important economic and child-rearing decisions. African American fathers who have adjusted to sharing these roles are more likely to live in nurturing family environments. Many African- American fathers have been observed taking an active part in the education of their children, talking to teachers about a child's adjustment, and teaching their children survival skills in the community. But fathers who are under a great deal of economic or social stress may not always be able to be the fathers they want to be. In extreme cases, economic stress may lead a father to leave the home or to react abusively toward his children or spouse.

Although mainstream researchers have not established the normative patterns of paternal role functions in the family, many workers behave as if African American fathers only practice negative child-rearing patterns. Some even discount the literature demonstrating the similarities in African American and mainstream paternal family relationship patterns. Our concern is that too many human service professionals and researchers focus only on those fathers who experience extreme difficulty in other community systems as well as in the family and generalize negative behavior to all fathers regardless of socioeconomic class or condition of the family. The lack of coherent theory on the factors affecting performance of fathering roles leads some social scientists to blame the victim.[2]

Cultural-Deficit Theory Limits Academic Researchers

When the major social-science literature is reviewed, one can not help but be struck by the way African American fathers are evaluated from a disorganization or cultural-deficit theoretical perspective.[3] Billingsley reacted to the negative evaluations of African Americans as a pathological or culturally-deprived people by mainstream American researchers and suggested an alternative social-systems perspective for use in evaluating African American families. Billingsley sees the African American family as a distinctive, viable system. Unfortunately, very few family researchers and practitioners have used Billingsley's systems perspective to assess and work with African American fathers and their families.[4]

Peters has provided an excellent critique of common research approaches and conceptual frameworks for studying parenting roles in African- American families. She suggests that many researchers were influenced by Park and Myrdal who assumed that assimilation of African Americans into mainstream society was both possible and probable; that African Americans are culturally deprived; and that when African Americans differ from white Americans, these differences should be understood as deficiencies. [5]

White and Parham noted that cultural-deprivation theorists assumed inadequate exposure of African Americans to European American values, norms, customs, and lifestyles. African Americans were thought to require cultural enrichment to be accepted by the dominant society.[6] The problems faced by African American men and their families were understood as internal problems of individual family members.

When external factors were recognized, they were seen by workers to be of little consequence to individual or family adjustment. It is interesting that the proponents of this approach were unable to provide recommendations on how to culturally enrich African Americans or on how to evaluate the effects of this enrichment.

All too infrequently do researchers and practitioners explore the historical, economic, political, and social influences on the family roles of African American fathers from an African American perspective. Theories rarely do more than compare one ethnic group to another, one class to another. They are based on white middle-class standards, unchanged since the turn-of- the-century. We must move toward understanding African American family functioning in a less ethnocentrically biased manner. [7]

Psychological-Deficit Approach Limits Human Services Workers

How have human services institutions utilized their skills to help fathers in their families? Like their academic counterparts, human service workers tend to use either a psychological-deficit approach or a cultural-deficit approach to understand African American families.

In working with human-services students and professionals, we have found them discussing social systems as an approach to dealing with fathers and their families. However, when their assessment of African American fathers were completed we found an overall dependence on psychological-deficit theories in evaluating the fathers problems. In many workers' case records we found words like angry, hostile, aggressive, unreliable, lazy, indolent, and other psychological-deficit code words that do more to explain why the worker cannot help the father than they do to helping him find solutions to his problems. The result is that these human-services professionals-in-training blame the victim and fail to see that their own cultural expectations about finding work, relating to mothers alone, or participating in community discussions without fathers are detracting from their ability to objectively analyze family situations.

Many mainstream and minority workers are aware of environmental factors influencing families: deteriorating and unsafe neighborhoods, the movement of employment facilities out of African American communities, blatant discrimination in employment hiring practices in suburban industries. They are also aware of the reduction in welfare services and other programs that serve unemployed fathers and the increasing numbers of fathers and families in homeless shelters. However, even workers who recognize these stressors continue to consciously or unconsciously expect fathers grappling with such situations to be "normal." And, for many workers, normal seems to require that the father act blind to employment barriers, that he find a job, any job, regardless of whether it will allow him to adequately support his family, and that he live a "productive" family life.

Many human services workers have personally felt the impact of losing a job when their agency reduced professional personnel, or have had their benefits restructured so that they had to pay their own health insurance premiums or go without, or have gone for years without a salary increase. Several states have instituted furloughs during which workers are laid off for a specified time period without pay or unemployment compensation. These and other policies have sensitized some workers to exigencies of the marketplace.

It is easy for African American human services workers to feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems. They are a relatively small part of the human services delivery system and they are usually absent in the policymaking part of the organization. They, too, are constrained by structural conditions from providing all of the support needed by a family. And many human service workers sometimes discard the role of family advocate because of their own need for economic survival.

For many reasons, then, human services workers often exclude African American fathers from the potential benefits of their help or therapy. Some practitioners are more comfortable working with the mother or children and are uncomfortable dealing with the father's problems. When they do work with African American fathers and their families, some practitioners employ a psychological-deficit worldview, seeing therapy as a method of reducing negative personality traits resulting from identifiable disabilities or problems understood as residing within the individual or family. When fathers experience personal or psychological problems as the result of events over which they have no control, they should receive the therapy these deficit practitioners can give to help return them to an active family life. But, the indiscriminate use of a deficit-based diagnostic model which targets the elimination of actual or inferred deficits in the father may be damaging to the father's feelings of competence and his self-esteem. A father experiencing stress related to the loss of a job, for example, should be helped through support for his problems and retraining.

The work of Lewis and Looney suggests an alternative to the psychological-deficit approach. According to their approach, family competence is defined as possessing attributes necessary or helpful to performing certain tasks. The focus is on tasks family members perform for each other rather than for the society-at-large. Lewis and Looney pose the question: What does a psychologically healthy family do for its members? One might also ask: How do we identify the psychologically healthy roles fathers perform within the family and utilize them in our work with fathers who have family problems? Families ought to raise children who become autonomous and they should also provide sufficient emotional support for both stabilizing the parents personalities and continuing their emotional maturation. Families should also function in a way that provides members with an optimal balance of autonomy and attachment. We need to observe and evaluate paternal relationships: attachment to, intimacy with, and commitment to other family members.[8]

Taking an Ecological Approach

Our approach focuses on getting human services professionals to develop a broader view of African American family life. It is important to develop skills in understanding both the context in which these families find themselves and to explore the positive coping mechanisms that African American working- and middle-class families use to deal with their problems. Fathers exist as part of the family system, and should not be viewed in isolation. They should not be seen as separate from their families or from their communities. Human services decisions made about fathers should consider the connections between these individuals and the social ecological system in which they live.

Fathers of all ethnic groups play a variety of roles in the family and

community that can lead to positive or negative family outcomes: they should not be viewed as pathological or helpless. Further, the interactions fathers have with external institutions have a direct impact on role performance in the family. Human services workers will be better able to provide service to fathers if they understand the interaction between the effects of barriers in economic, educational, and social institutions and the fathers' abilities to effectively carry out their different family roles.

Human services workers should explore how fathers utilize internal, family, and community resources and coping strategies to mitigate negative outside influences while performing family roles. McAdoo has reviewed barriers to African American fathers fulfilling the roles of provider, nurturer, socializer, decision maker, and positive supporter of their spouse.[9] While economic, educational, and social barriers are formidable, some researchers have shown that economically stable African American fathers and their families have devised values and living patterns that help overcome the impact of these barriers. Hill, in this journal (see article on page 3), presents these strategies as strengths of African American families.[10 11 12]

We must analyze the different choices working-, middle-, and upper-income African American fathers use as they attempt to attain stability and grow in their relationships with their families. We must explore the positive and negative father roles and their effects on the family. We are able to factor in contextual variables (e.g., the loss of a job or the discovery of a potential life-threatening illness) and look at fathers' responses and the impact on families. The human services worker should also explore how the father's present experiences in work, family, and social life relate to his experiences as a child in his family of origin.

In reviewing human services journals over the years, there are few reports that demonstrate how the strengths of African American economically-stable families can be used to help fathers maintain their feelings of competence and commitment in families that are less stable. There are also few public policy discussions that utilize a positive approach in working with families or presentations of practical strategies to help African American fathers overcome the external barriers they face in supporting their families, such as racism, crime, drugs, poor schools, deteriorating neighborhoods, lack of adequately paying jobs, which hamper their abilities to function in their paternal roles.

We were unable to find articles in human services journals related to the impact of institutional racism on fathers and its effect on families. In addition, very few researchers have explored the area of racial socialization, the process by which families help their children understand and deal with racial prejudices and bigotry. We suggest that fathers who are actively engaged in racial socialization practices with their children will have children who are better able to cope with the barriers they experience in schools, libraries, in employment, and in other integrated community settings. Fathers who experienced racial socialization in their families of origin may be better able to protect their families from the harsh effects of racism. These are a few fruitful areas for research on fathers and family practice.

Conclusions and Recommendations

There is a need to review human services theory and practice as it has evolved historically with regard to working with fathers. The policy and organizational constraints in working with fathers need to be identified and changed. Other constraints such as workers' lack of training, racial prejudices, and class biases also need to be examined and programs initiated to train human services administrators, supervisors, and their staffs.

We are interested in developing a nonbiased, normative view of fathering in African American families. There must be more sensitivity to African American cultural values, practices, and the contexts in which these practices take place. Human services practitioners must see both the strengths and weaknesses in the roles fathers play in their families and pay more attention to the interrelationships between external institutions, environment, and family functioning. Professional workers need to do all that they can to ensure that their relationships with fathers are characterized by respect, shared decision-making, and collaboration. We also must make sure we are building on fathers' strengths, both within their families and in communities.

Different fathers have different needs. Some fathers have all of the psychological problems we observe in problematic families. Some fathers are unable to actively perform family roles because of extreme external stress. Other fathers, especially young fathers, need to learn parenting skills. Some fathers may be doing adequate jobs of parenting, however, because of social-class biases, practitioners may be unable to accept their family role performance. Finally, some fathers may be doing outstanding jobs as parents, supportive spouses, active church members, workers, and community activists. Human services professionals need to seek a more balanced view of paternal functioning in its context. The utilization of the works cited in this study in the training of human services workers should go a long way towards helping them establish positive relationships with fathers, thereby helping these fathers to function better in their families.

Notes

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[2] MCADOO, J.L. (1993). The roles of African American fathers: an ecological perspective. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 74(1), pp. 28-36.

[3] PETERS, M.F. (1988). Parenting in black families with young children: a historical perspective. In H.P. McAdoo (ed.) *Black Families*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 228-241.

[4] BILLINGSLEY, A. (1968). *Black Families in White America*. Englewood-Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

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[8] LEWIS, J. M. AND LOONEY, J.G. (1983). *The Long Struggle: Well-functioning Working-class Black Families*. New York: Brunner/Mazel Publishers; pp. 1-29.

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[10] BILLINGSLEY, A. (1968).

[11] HILL, R. (1972). *The Strengths of Black Families*. New York: Emerson Hall.

[12] MCADOO, H.P. (1988). Transgenerational patterns of upward mobility in African American families. In H. McAdoo (ed.) *Black Families*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, pp. 148-168.

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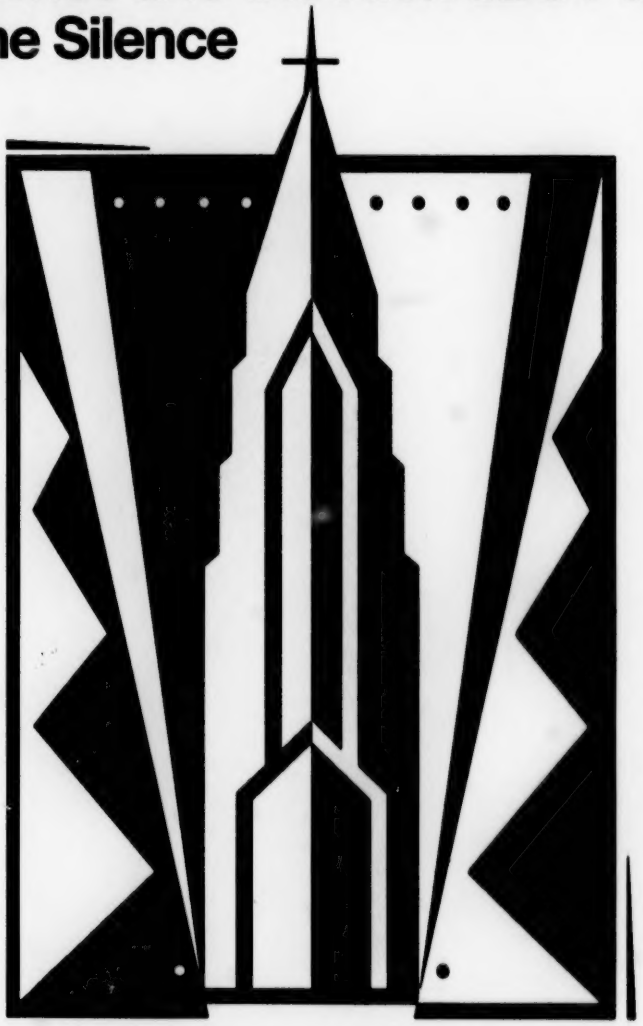
■ by Suzanne Randolph, Ph.D, Andrew S. Billingsley, Ph.D., and Rev. Aundrea Scott

Black Churches and the HIV/AIDS Pandemic: Breaking the Silence



The HIV/AIDS crisis which was referred to in its first decade as an epidemic is now being referred to as a pandemic because of its worldwide impact. People of color are disproportionately affected, particularly people of African descent. For example, in the United States, nearly a third of the total AIDS cases are African American, while African Americans represent only twelve percent of the U.S. population.[1] As with other crises in the African American community, those concerned with the HIV/AIDS crisis are looking for support from traditional institutions such as black churches to stem the tide of the pandemic and to provide health and human services to those already affected.

Black churches, which traditionally have been institutional strongholds in addressing community needs, have been perceived as silent on the issue of HIV/AIDS. There is growing evidence, however, that these churches and their ministries are mounting tremendous responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis. The traditional work of churches and their ministries often provides opportunities to reduce the crisis, including support for HIV-affected individuals and families.

The National Black Church Family Project[2] at the University of Maryland (College Park) investigated the family support programs of a random sample of North-Central and Northeastern churches (Billingsley, 1993). While only 10 of the 635 churches sampled reported programs directly involved with HIV/AIDS, over two-thirds indicated that they had community outreach programs relevant to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Programs on children and youth addressed health issues of sexuality, AIDS, substance-abuse and pregnancy prevention. Family-oriented programs provided instrumental services such as food and shelter. Just under ten percent of the programs targeting adults and families provided counseling for AIDS-risk reduction, drug-abuse prevention, and other health issues. Many programs also had ministries for the homeless and for men and women in prisons. Also, when asked to indicate the most significant problems confronting African American communities, drug abuse (a risk factor for HIV/AIDS) was reported with high frequency.

These data on community-outreach programs and ministries through which HIV/AIDS-affected persons and their families can be served suggest that black churches have not been silent on the HIV/AIDS crisis. It is simply that some churches prefer to do their work quietly, while others prefer to be more visible and more vocal.

Speaking Out: Local and National Initiatives

Local Initiatives

In New York, one of the epicenters of the AIDS crisis, AIDS is among the targets of black churches launching a crusade to save their communities. A 42-church coalition received a three-year, $1.4 million city grant to house and support persons living with AIDS. Two other $1.4 million AIDS-care grants were awarded to Harlem Churches for Community Improvement (an alliance of 50 churches and two mosques) and to the Southeast Queens Clergy for Community Improvement (a 64-member alliance). St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Harlem was given $9 million in state funds to build a 40-bed AIDS facility.

In Washington, D.C. the Congress of National Black Churches and the D.C. Public Health Commission's Office of AIDS Activities delivered an education program, the ABC's of AIDS, at more than 100 churches. In addition, a program called Love in Action trained over 150 ministers about HIV/AIDS so that they could share the information with their congregations. Coalitions of churches have formed AIDS prison ministries, home- and hospital-visit ministries, HIV ministries for the homeless population, and HIV-education and prevention ministries.

Also in Washington, the Inner City AIDS Network (ICAN), under the direction of Rev. Aundrea Scott, was established to educate the community at a time when HIV and AIDS were increasing at alarming rates. ICAN provided

five- and eight-week programs to educate segments of the religious community from an African American perspective. ICAN's Peer Counselor/Peer Educator Training Program has trained over 160 members of the religious community and has helped to prepare several AIDS ministries. This component includes issues about the role of the black church, religious responses to HIV, developing AIDS ministries, and pastoral care. Programs are currently being implemented in Washington's Baptist, Pentecostal, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Methodist, and Catholic churches.

Federal Initiatives

Federal policy does not aim to mobilize churches on a nationwide basis. Some government initiatives, however, have recognized and supported the potential contributions of the religious community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) funded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1988 to provide comprehensive HIV/AIDS education to church members through RACE (Reducing AIDS through Community Education). Over 1,000 church members in five cities were reached: Atlanta, Charlotte, Kansas City, Detroit, and Tuscaloosa. The National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) provides training to clergy through its national and regional HIV/AIDS education programs. CDC also has a Religious Partnership Program in its National AIDS Information and Education Programs Branch which provides technical assistance particularly to historically black churches.[3]

Overcoming Stigma and Increasing Involvement

Black churches, indeed, have the potential to be tremendous resources in response to the AIDS pandemic. However, factors surrounding HIV/AIDS present challenges for black churches: AIDS has been generally linked to behaviors that are not condoned by society or by many religions.

Although AIDS cases continue to be most prevalent in the homosexual community, the reported incidences of AIDS and HIV infection have been increasing among women of childbearing age, particulary in African American and Latino communities. Of increasing concern are the rising numbers of cases of pediatric and adolescent AIDS among which African Americans and Latinos are disproportionately represented. African American communities and churches are realizing that this pandemic has implications beyond those HIV-affected individuals having lifestyles inconsistent with church theologies. The implications of HIV extend to all families, communities, and to society at large.

The stigma attached to those infected with HIV or suffering from AIDS also mars those assisting them: many assume that the helper condones the behaviors or lifestyles that have resulted in the infection or disease. As a result, traditional institutions upon which communities have relied for assistance in times of crisis have been slow to mobilize assistance. Alternative networks of assistance have had to quickly respond to the epidemic.

"Many churches thought to be silent on the issue are in fact quiet fires—but they have found ways to integrate AIDS/HIV education and service delivery into their total ministry."

Black churches have been caught in a dilemma, either ignoring their ailing congregants and communities or providing assistance and risking the support of congregants and others who shun any association with the pandemic. This dilemma is often concealed by claims or fears that HIV/AIDS is associated with behaviors in conflict with church teachings. In reality, many of those infected by HIV/AIDS live in the same communities and are members of the churches caught in this dilemma.

To say that ministers in black churches do not recognize or acknowledge this reality would be naive. Ministers are acutely aware of the vastness of the problem and struggle with the effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic daily. Churches in African American communities are assisting those with HIV/AIDS—for example, through prison and homeless ministries—in ways that are not specifically HIV/AIDS programs, but which are no less essential in fighting the pandemic. So while highly visible and active prevention and intervention efforts may not be forthcoming, there are some alternatives for involving black churches in a compassionate, community-based response to the pandemic.

Alternatives for Church Involvement

1) Prison ministries and homeless ministries present opportunities to provide men and women who may be disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis with important psychological and emotional support.

2) A ministry for the sick and shut-in can provide interim support for individuals and families through visits, phone calls, cards, or other informal support.

3) Formal support for the sick and shut-in, especially food and shelter, is a routine service of churches. HIV/AIDS-affected individuals and their families can be incorporated into such programs without stigma.

4) Support for family members who care for ill persons or who are left in charge of children orphaned by a parent's AIDS-related death or illness can be provided through volunteer respite-care networks organized by the church.

5) Churches can provide space for sexuality-education programs for youth, and for community workshops and related educational activities sponsored by community-based organizations. These can fulfill the need for community education without the church risking the loss of congregants fearful of any association with HIV/AIDS.[4]

Approaching Black Churches

For those who would like to consider churches as resources, the above may provide some idea of the range of ways churches might become involved. The following suggestions are offered to assist educators and other family support practitioners in approaching churches in black communities.

1) Recognize that not all churches have remained or are willing to remain silent on the pandemic. Many are outspoken, hold public forums, participate in AIDS task forces, and provide direct services

to HIV-affected individuals and their families. In many of the urban areas where HIV is at epidemic proportions, there are AIDS task forces or church coalitions through which programming may be initiated. Identify these resources and work with them to implement direct service or AIDS-specific educational programs.

On the other hand, involvement in the AIDS crisis, whether directly or indirectly, may still be a threatening proposition for some churches. Even though they are involved in related programs, they may not be ready to take that step toward public identification with HIV/AIDS. Therefore, caution should be exercised in approaching church leadership. Conduct an informal needs assessment with acquaintances who may be members of the church and have them assist you in making initial contacts. The leader of a selected ministry can, if his or her ministry is a more appropriate mechanism for accessing church leadership, inform the church's head. While the church takes a supporting role through its ministries or facilities, enlist other community-based organizations or leaders who will sponsor specific AIDS activities.

2) An issue for the black church community is how the dominant protestant churches can embrace and work with the Islamic community. Islam is one of the fastest growing religions among African American males, many of whom have converted to Islam while in prison (many are HIV-positive before conversion to Islam). Therefore, HIV/AIDS programs that are ecumenically sensitive need to consider interfaith perspectives that are Christian-Islamic as well as Judeo-Christian.

3) As devastating as AIDS has been to the African American community, it is only one of many problems; and therefore a major issue for the African-American community is the development of comprehensive approaches to health promotion and prevention. Because churches are involved in other problems that place people at risk for HIV/AIDS, strategies may need to build on those existing approaches and de-emphasize AIDS-specific programs. Many churches thought to be silent on the issue are in fact quiet fires—but they have found ways to integrate AIDS/HIV education and service delivery into their total ministry.

4) Approach the community where they are on the issue. Some members of the black community hold the belief that HIV/AIDS is genocidal in its origins (i.e., the government intentionally introduced the virus into black communities as a way to reduce the population). Religious networking, already complicated by religious attitudes about the risky behaviors associated with HIV/AIDS, could be further damaged by these fears. Those seeking to coordinate programs with black churches must not only show ecumenical sensitivity but must also address and reduce these fears.

5) Use caution in considering the role of the church in social marketing (i.e., in reaching those at risk, delivering educational messages, and promoting programs). While the church may be viewed as a means of access to the community because of the position of respect it has held in black communities, most churches with the resources for assistance programs are comprised of members who do not live in the communities where the churches are located. The National Black Family Church Project data indicate that the churches sponsoring family support programs usually have members who reside in more affluent neighborhoods or in the suburbs. Therefore, while the church may have access to some members of its surrounding community, those most at risk may not have been previously involved with the church.

"The HIV/AIDS pandemic requires nothing less than the pooling of community-based resources to ensure the best quality of life for all of those affected."

The HIV/AIDS pandemic requires nothing less than the pooling of community-based resources to ensure the best quality of life for all of those affected. As ignorance is dispelled and more facts about HIV/AIDS are widely known, more people and groups throughout the religious community are realizing their roles in the fight against HIV/AIDS. As we speak to improve the silence, we hope that black churches will take larger roles in addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. As we seek other partners to assist HIV-affected individuals and their families, or those at risk, the black church generally should not be ignored as a candidate simply because some churches have remained silent.

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[3] For more information contact: Sonya Gray Religious Partnership Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 404/639-0975.

[4] Two helpful resource organizations for involving community organizations in AIDS education and services efforts are your local branch of the American Red Cross HIV/AIDS African American Program (consult your local telephone directory) and the Association of Black Psychologists AIDS Program, 202/722-0808.

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The National Black Church Family Project is a national probability study of churches regarding their family support programs. The project was funded in part by the Ford Foundation and the Lilly Endowment.

■ by Algea O. Harrison, Ph.D.

The Importance of Including Grandparents in Services for African American Families

Extended-family organizational patterns are dominant in African American communities.[1] In extended families, more than one generation of a family reside in the same household. Thus you may find a child living with her mother and father, a grandmother, and a great grandfather. The extended family is both a culturally-derived tradition and the result of adaptation to social and economic pressures.[2] Grandparents assist with the socialization of the children. Not only do parents expect this, but grandparents themselves expect to play a central role in the lives of their grandchildren.[3] Extended families' ability to adapt to economic pressures, their flexible gender roles, and their willingness to stretch household boundaries for the inclusion of others have heightened the importance of grandparents in the lives of African American children.

Grandparent and Grandchild Experiences

Geographic proximity plays an important role in the active involvement and emotional closeness between grandparents and grandchildren. Affection and attachment are frequently expressed by both sides of the grandparent and grandchild dyad. Importantly, grandparents have been found to enhance the development of their grandchildren by giving them a sense of positive self-regard and social competence. Probably because of the traditional role that women have played in the lives of children, grandmothers are most often listed as the favorite grandparent.

Grandmothers actively maintain intergenerational family ties. Indeed when grandmothers share family residences with their single adult daughters, they are perceived by their daughters and grandchildren as supporting, controlling, and punishing grandchildren— far more than grandmothers with other living arrangements.[4,5] These dynamics are especially potent when the grandchild is the result of a teenage pregnancy. Teenage parenthood often leads to negative consequences for the teen mother. It has been associated with difficulties in limiting the number of future children, dropping out of high school, welfare dependency, and diminishing of the chances of marriage.[6] The grandmother's involvement has greatly affected the lives of these teenage mothers and grandchildren by increasing the quality of childcare.

Importantly, grandmothers are also often critics of child-rearing techniques, mitigating harsh and inappropriate parenting. When grandmothers are present, the mother has fewer household maintenance tasks and childcare duties to perform than when the mother is rearing children alone.[7] Family anecdotes, modeling, and child-rearing activities are some of the ways parenting skills are transmitted between the generations. Importantly, grandmothers are often the most salient source of knowledge about child development for parents in the African American community.[8]

Grandfathers also important figures in the lives of their grandchildren and the grandfather's role is viewed as important to his resolution of issues related to growing older. As men grow older, nurturing behaviors are more frequently valued and displayed.[9] Grandchildren view grandfathers as an important source of legends, knowledge, affection, ethnic rituals, and acceptance. Their presence is especially valuable for grandsons who are growing up in female-headed households. Grandfathers' masculine behaviors are also important to the development of femininity among their granddaughters.

Grandparents as Resources

Grandparents as a reserve source of financial and emotional support are very important in the African American community. As resources, they have become crucial, especially as a large number of female-headed households

require assistance.[10] Grandparents are more likely to care for the children of single parents, allowing the parents to finish educations or to pursue career goals. They are sources of financial assistance. Among African American middle- and upper-middle-class families, resource interchanges are usually received by the grandparent in the form of medical care and financial subsidies. Conversely, among African-American families in the lower economic strata, grandmothers usually direct the resource interchanges towards their children and grandchildren. These grandmothers often provide childcare or supplement their children's income. Historically, the pooling of resources has facilitated upward mobility in the African American community.[11]

Future Directions

As the cumulative effects of governmental neglect of urban communities, where large numbers of low-income African American families live, become more apparent, the role of grandparents will become more crucial for the survival of their grandchildren. Nobles and his colleagues[12] have stressed that in one generation, large segments of the African American community have shifted away from the traditional African American culture to a drug culture with self-destructive values. Thus, in the immediate future, grandparents will be a major source of ethnic traditions and the generation responsible for re-establishing and maintaining ethnic identity in numerous households. Social agencies that are supportive of families will be advised to direct their services to both grandparents and parents.

Grandparents should be actively encouraged to share in the provided services, especially if the immediate family is unstable. Professionals who deliver services to the African American community should be aware of the literature on the role of grandparents in extended families. African American clients should be approached with this awareness. Some models for multisystem approaches to treatment, for clinicians working in inner-city community mental health centers,[13] address the inclusion of grandparents in treatment programs.

It is reasonable to assume that in most African American families, grandparents will be involved with their grandchildren. It has been estimated that at least half of African American mothers are embedded in an extended family network system.[14] Therefore, human service efforts should be directed to all adults who are important parental figures in the lives of African American children.

Notes

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■ by Betty J. Overton-Adkins, Ph.D.

In Our Mothers' Homes There is Still God: African American Spirituality

"Now you say after me, in my mother's house there is still God," Mother Young tells her daughter Beneatha in Lorraine Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun*. And Beneatha repeats, "In my mother's house there is still God."[1] In the African American family, there is very often still God. Robert Hill's study of black families, *The Strength of Black Families*, includes strong religious orientation among the factors critical to the survival and development of stable black families.[2] Family-service providers are beginning to examine how religious orientation factors into working with African American families. Karen E. Kelley, Senior Training and Program Development Specialist for the Family Resource Coalition and others have called upon service providers to develop an awareness of the spirituality of African American families.[3]

My life among my people has taught me that African Americans are deeply spiritual. I assert this generalization, one not based on scientific study or surveys, with the same confidence with which W.E.B. DuBois and other scholars have made similar statements in the past. Our spirituality has been seen both negatively and positively. We have been accused of docility and superstition, fascinated by the supernatural. We have been praised for our ability to survive oppression and for our soulfulness.

Spirituality is the backdrop for all those hilarious and horrible stories about our fear of "haints" and for countless pieces of literature from slave narratives to Naylor's *Mama Day* and Angelou's "And Still Rise," and I believe it is the real source of things like gospel and jazz.

I do not equate spirituality with religiousity, though many African Americans are also deeply religious. Spirituality is broader than religiosity. Being deeply religious implies a strong adherence to particular religious beliefs: one may be spiritual without being religious. What I know as the spiritual nature of African Americans is our recognition that there is a guiding Force (some would say Forces) in the universe which is greater than all humanity; we accept that Force as It operates in the world and in our lives.

African American spirituality is grounded in connectedness, not just to the supernatural force of a God, but to community. What is most meaningful in life is ultimately relational, calling us to question our obligations to other humans and to a Supreme Being. This is the essence of our spirituality: whatever our religious persuasion, it is something that influences our lives.

This spirituality is rooted in our African past. In the Africa from which the ancestors of African Americans were brought, what we call religion was pervasive and indistinguishable from other areas of life.[4] Our African ancestors lived constantly with the idea of Spirit working in all of nature and in their lives.

Africans believed in a Supreme Force or Being who had different names among the different tribal groups; as important were the concerns about one's relation in community. Spiritual life was life in relation to others, for traditional African religions stressed the necessary balance between one's identity as a member of a family and society, and one's personal identity and responsibility. In the chapter, "Black Religion" in Wilmore's *African American Religious Studies*, Maulana Karenga notes John Mbiti's summation of African spiritual relations, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am." Karenga himself says, "In this conception, the highest moral ideal is to live in harmony, know oneself and one's duties through others and reach one's fullness in cooperation with and through support from one's significant others."[5]

The transplanted Africans did not abandon this sense of the spiritual during the middle passage. In fact, it arrived fully intact on the shores of the Americas. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois writes, "The Negro has already been pointed out many times as a religious animal—a being of that deep emotional nature which turns instinctively toward the supernatural."[6] The traditional African religions were replaced primarily by Christian traditions and the basic spiritual grounding of African Americans became enmeshed with denominational tenets. Black churches and predominantly black denominations emerged as the most common avenues through which our spiritual life is expressed.

James H. Cone, one of the leading authorities on black theology, notes that our spirituality and the theology derived from it are unique. He indicates that we have developed a spirituality that plants our feet firmly on earth and forges the wedding of black radicalism and religion—and the two have been empowering forces for us in the political, educational, and social arenas of this country. The civil rights movement, one of the early manifestations of liberation theology, was a political movement

fueled by our spiritual and religious beliefs. The black struggle and the faith that has nourished it have been important symbols to other people.[7]

We might look at our community in the light of black spirituality and use it to heal some of the many pressing social and economic problems which plague us.

Recent years have brought about significant changes in the marital and familial patterns of many black Americans. Involvements in gang activity, drug usage, crime, and other indicators of social and psychological problems have caused us to have to examine what is happening within our communities. Racism remains the root cause of many of these ills. Lack of jobs, substandard educational opportunities within our communities, inadequate housing and healthcare, and little prospect for change in these conditions exacerbate pressures on modern families. Families and whole communities are disintegrating. Many persons within the African American community see the need to use every means possible to help respond more meaningfully to the dilemmas that face us.

Can our spirituality now play a role in helping revitalize our families and communities? Are there ways that family service providers can use the spiritual undergirding of African American culture in designing support services? Are there partnering approaches with religious institutions that can provide more comprehensive service delivery? Are there opportunities for our interest in reconnecting with our African past and African spiritual principals to address family issues?

I ask these questions as someone who is not professionally trained in human services or family service. I ask them as an observer, and what I observe is that many social programs often overlook or diminish the spiritual connections in people's lives. Human-services agencies have tried to steer clear of anything that smacked of teaching, advocating, or any way using religion. I understand this approach, but I also know that there are ways to recognize and address individuals' spiritual needs without proselytizing. I have observed that few programs have been aware of or taken advantage of the upsurge of interest in Africa and a return to African spiritual values. The growing popularity of *Kwanzaa* observance is only one manifestation of this reconnection, and the use of the seven principles associated with *Kwanzaa*—*Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith)—have implications beyond the period of *Kwanzaa*. Spirituality, for many, is the very source of the self-esteem and pride that we are now creating expensive programs to teach.

Since families are the primary social unit within which we learn to love, develop conscience, and acquire the values and skills that will make us good humans and responsible citizens, social and family support services must find ways to help direct our spiritual values toward rebuilding families, and through them, our communities. I know there are untapped resources within our family structures (those grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, aunts, and other keepers of the faith) who should be empowered to help reconstruct family ties and reclaim those things which unify and strengthen.

Our African heritage and African spirituality present means of generating a new moral perspective. African Americans today sense that we must redefine and recover ourselves, our roles, and our spirituality if we are to survive meaningfully in this society. I suggest that we need every aspect of our culture to help us.

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About the FRC's African American Caucus

In October of 1990, the Family Resource Coalition's (FRC) third national conference saw the creation of the African American Caucus. This conference witnessed an increase in attendance by African American professionals, but fell short in providing sessions and workshops that addressed the issues, concerns, and problems of African American families and professionals.

There was a recognition that a significant number of African American families were being served by programs in the FRC network. A group of African American professionals attending the conference began to meet to discuss their experience at this conference—in hallways, in restaurants, and in hotel rooms—and what emerged was the African American Caucus of the Family Resource Coalition.

The Caucus expressed the desire to enter into partnership with FRC to enhance family support services provided to African American families.

The Family Resource Coalition, excited at the prospect of having a caucus to address the concerns and needs of African American families, has worked diligently over the last three years with the Caucus to support its activities.

The 1992 FRC Conference was a resounding success. There was a strong, positive African American presence demonstrated through the Cultural Competency Track, with standing-room-only in some cultural competency sessions.

The African American Caucus embraces the Afrocentric perspective embodied in the *Nguzo Saba* (seven principles) defined by Dr. Maulana Karenga: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith). We believe that through reclaiming our communal African heritage, the AAC will demonstrate the connection between the principles of family support and African-centered values. The Family Resource Coalition's African American Caucus invites you to join us in our quest for self-determination in the family support movement.

This issue is the beginning of our quest. We hope to hear from all of you, members and non-members. We invite suggestions, dialogue, and papers on the subjects in this *Report* and on any other issues you would like to see presented. We hope this special issue stimulates your interest, both in the Family Resource Coalition and in its African American Caucus. For more information on the contents of this issue and the African American Caucus, contact the Family Resource Coalition.

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